

# WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE WORLD OF ART

ON the avenue yesterday I fell in with a young man, an assistant in the gallery of one of the dealers, who told me that a cousin of his was holding an exhibition in one of the rival establishments and that he was on his way to see it. His cousin, he said, had passed a number of years in Paris, and the family had been immensely relieved and pleased upon his return to find that the young painter had been absolutely uncontaminated by "modern art" and painted nice pictures that anybody would like.

"It's terrible the sort of thing some of those fellows are putting over on the public," he said. "Have you seen the Picabia Exhibition in the Modern Gallery?"

"Yes, what do you think of them?"

"I think," and an expression of deep loathing passed over his young face, "I think they are insincere. Don't you agree with me?"

"Hardly. On the contrary, I think Picabia is oversincere, if there be such a thing as oversincerity. Look about you."

We were trying to cross the roadway and the block of motors extending from the Forty-second street crossing prevented us. Immediately confronting us were the rubber tires of countless automobiles, and the pistons and valves were shining brightly. Above against the sky could be seen the rectilinear lines of the steel beams of new office buildings, varied by the signs of the derricks and softened here and there by an occasional rope and pulley.

"This is what you see every day. This is what countless thousands of New Yorkers see every day of their

"Now that you explain it to me," the young man said, and there was a note of fear in his voice, "I see it differently. Here we are at my cousin's show. Won't you come in? It's awfully nice work, I assure you. You won't! Well, I'll see you again soon. Good-by."

He saw it differently! I wondered if he really did. It struck me that the conversation was altogether too quick. He had yielded to my opinion precisely as he had previously yielded to the arguments of his unprogressive family. It really is one of the most difficult things in the world to induce people to think for themselves on subjects of art.

So many people are looking about for methods of assisting young artists that it is odd that it has never occurred to any of our well meaning rich to endow a magazine in which the advanced young artists may voice their ideals. Even a rich academician might do this without quarrelling with his conscience.

If an academician doesn't like modern art and thinks it should be done away with, the easiest, quickest way to accomplish the desideratum is to allow modern art to express itself. Give it plenty of rope and allow it to hang itself, is the idea. Perhaps it may hang itself permanently up in some of our museums, and although that may not have been the expectation of the benefactor, at least he will gain great credit thereby.

I hope it is apparent that this rich, ruse and as yet wholly imaginary academician will have nothing to lose by endowing a magazine for modern art. Of course, you understand, it isn't absolutely necessary that the giver of the endowment be an academician. Anybody can put it up who wishes. Only it certainly would be more niggardly to have an academician assisting in such an enterprise and with such an arrière pensée.

Unfortunately an endowment is necessary. Even in Paris it is noticeable that such magazines as *Cahiers d'aujourd'hui*, *Soirees de Paris*, *Main tenant*, *L'Elan*, *le Mot*, &c., have ephemeral existences. It is too much to expect the brilliant young people who provide the drawings and the reading matter in such reviews to chafe about pacifying the printers and the paper manufacturers on the days when the bills fall due.

Everybody knows who knows anything at all about such things, that writing vital art articles is twice as difficult as writing any other kind of vital articles, and puts a strain upon the system that unfits it permanently for business relationships. Especially is it so in this densely populated city, where everything in the way of inspiration is heard only over highly powered receivers.

Then, too, modern art requires de luxe printing. This is curious and paradoxical, but it is a fact. No modern art magazine can be a modern art magazine, for instance, without illustrations printed from wood blocks. In the primitive days of the early wood engravers, no doubt, such prints cost nothing at all, but nowadays they cost considerable. In fact being primitive in these days is as expensive as being a gentleman farmer.

But the spirited rewards are great, as all gentleman farmers and wood engravers will tell you. Even when the drawings for modern art reviews



"AUGUST IN THE CITY (HIGH BRIDGE PARK)." BY GEORGE LUKS. On exhibition in the Kraushaar Galleries.

are in pen and ink modern artists insist upon dividing the work between the finest of razor edge lines and masses of overpoweringly solid black, a combination that looks like nothing at all unless printed on handmade paper. But of course with an endowment fund all the de luxe part of the affair is easy.

A recent *Figaro* contains an article upon the late Georges Hoenschel, whose sudden death was previously announced. After citing his activities in the world of art and mentioning among others the Hoenschel Collection that is now part of the J. Pierpont Morgan collection, it goes on to say:

"But if he had an unflagging fervor for the chefs d'oeuvre of the masters of ornament of previous epochs, he also gave the most careful, kindly, generous interest to the artists of his own day. We all know his friendship for Carries, the sculptor and potter, and in the libraries they guard preciously the book he consecrated to the glory of the artist, the text of which he confided to our friend Arsene Alexandre.

"He had an intelligence open to all the susceptibilities to beauty and he spent it in an activity that knew neither rest nor interruption. Quite outside of his work as a student and as a decorator, outside of his duties in the Louvre, where he will be much regretted, he was in addition expert to the Court of Appeal and he brought to the affairs committed to him a careful justice and wisdom that finely attested his moral health.

"He was an original figure, very Parisian, who disappeared in full vigor, nothing ever having given a hint of so brusque an ending. He was an officer of the Legion d'Honneur."

The announcement that Arthur B.



"INNOCENCE." BY GEORGE LUKS. In the Kraushaar Galleries.

he eclipsed from time to time by pieces of furniture or other works of art. It is not likely, however, that much of it will ever be eclipsed. The spaces above the fireplace resolve into subdued and simple tones and almost invite the placing there of some ornamental carving or other object, but every inch of surface in the room is packed with interest. The various shadows caused by the angles and recesses of the room give the shadowy forms extra suggestiveness. The figures everywhere are unmistakably by Davies, and the color as color is as fine as his best.

The photograph gives but a pale reflection of the room, as the color values have been somewhat distorted by the camera, but those who know Mr. Davies's work can gain some idea of the true effects from it.

The room will take rank at once among the most important pieces of decoration in America. It appears to be a complete vindication of the theory that the "advance guard" have been preaching for some time that modern art is peculiarly well adapted for murals. The curiosity to see it will be great, but since this cannot be widely gratified the next best thing will be to insist that the next decorative undertaking of Mr. Davies



"TANGO ARTIST." BY GEORGE LUKS. In the Kraushaar Galleries.

be a commission for some public mural.

All of the Paris newspapers have been trying their hands at expertizing a Murillo which was discovered in the luggage of a Belgian refugee who was about to embark with the picture at Bordeaux for America. The work represents a Virgin with the Child upon her knees. "The canvas has all the cracks of age," says *Le Temps*, "and one will be obliged to resort to anthropometric measures to identify it."

One of the experts held that it was

a copy, an old one and not a very good one. Another thought it the work of a good pupil of Murillo. A later issue of the *Journal* takes a more hopeful view of the picture and states that the owner had had it insured for 75,000 francs since 1904. As no definite reason for detaining the Belgian refugee and his Murillo developed it was supposed that the money to America would be resumed, in which case the New York experts may join in the discussion.

Two unusual paintings by Puvig de Chavannes have been added to the already good representation of this artist's work in the Metropolitan Museum. They are decorative panels in brown monochrome, painted in 1870 and typifying the means of communication that besieged Paris had with the outside. They have been loaned by Mrs. James R. Jessup.

In one a woman clasps a carrier pigeon to her breast with one hand and with the other wards off an attacking eagle. In the other a woman clasps a musket and raises one hand toward a balloon that is floating overhead. The two figures are much alike in type and costume. The dress fits tightly to the body, but the skirts fall in the ample folds of the period.

An interesting comment on the painting occurs in Theophile Gautier's *Tableaux de Sieges*—Paris, 1870-1871. The translation of the passage is as follows: "A woman dressed in black was passing, a balloon was floating through the air, a fort was throwing shells at the Prussians, and out of these facts, with no relation one to the other and with no significance, results a delicious and sensitive composition and a tender poetry."

"Monsieur Puvig de Chavannes brought back from the ramparts a superb design which he afterward had lithographed and which recalled the grand and simple manner of the artist to whom are due those magnificent frescoes on canvas: War, Peace, Work and Rest.

"A slender and graceful woman in a long gown of mourning, her hair arranged like a widow's, the right hand resting on a musket to which the bayonet is attached, with the left stretched toward the sky, her face less than profile, stands on the platform of a bastion. The folds of her black gown break about her feet like the sharp folds of Gothic drapery, giving the look of a pedestal which sets off and adds to her elegance.

"A little below her one sees cannons, tents, battlements, pyramids of shells from a fort, its silhouette recognizable as Mont'Valerien, escape horizontal streaks of smoke. In a corner in the sky, already blurred by distance, is fading away the sphere of a balloon, the only means of communication with the outside world which is left to us.

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**DETAIL OF NEW MURAL DECORATION BY ARTHUR B. DAVIES.**

lives. These buzzsaws, steel hammers, hard mechanical forms are recorded on your brain. Whether you know it or not they are there. It is impossible not to live incessantly in the midst of such things without being influenced by them.

"If you were to talk honestly from your own experiences you would talk buzzsaw talk, for that is all you've heard. Instead you repeat like a mechanical doll or parrot formulas of beauty left over to you by ancestors who lived in the wilds of nature. If you really believed or understood what you say you would live yourself outdoors with nature.

"Picabia, on the other hand, actually dares to use the shapes of discs and piston rods to express his emotion. It is amazing that you picture dealers won't look at them simply and unconcernedly, as a child or an engineer might, to see what you get from them. Why, that arrangement of four black discs with the connecting rods, in gold and red, has something of the simplicity and force of early Japanese art. I should hardly call it insincere."



MURAL DECORATION BY ARTHUR B. DAVIES.

Davies has recently decorated a room in a New York house and that the result is a complete artistic success will not only give general pleasure, but will be sure to give a decided impetus to mural decoration in this country. The fact that the general public will not have access to the room will not affect its influence, for the power to project themselves across space and through solid walls. The inclinations recently shown by Mr. Davies for mural designs made it inevitable that he should attempt a room, but now that the work has been finished it is a matter of surprise to see in what a wholesale fashion he has carried it out. The scheme is not a mere matter of decorated panels placed in ordinary architectural settings, but the whole side walls of the room are covered, extending from ceiling to floor. The large decorations by Mr. Davies that were exhibited last spring in the Montross Galleries received a great deal of well merited praise, but it is safe to say that those who saw them will scarcely have an idea of the greater charm of the new room.

As in those panels the new wall

decorations are in a style that for want of a better word must be called "eclectic," but unlike them there are no lozenge shaped color divisions imposed upon the human outlines, a tendency that raised loud walls last year among the admirers who after having only recently learned to like Davies objected to his passing on to new problems. The outlines and forms are broken at will by the artist in the new work, but it is all done in so simple and plausible a fashion that it is unlikely that any save most ardent philistines will object. The first effect, on the contrary, is so quiet and natural that it is only afterward that one sees that a daring innovation has occurred. The ordinary individual of refined susceptibilities would gain the same impression that one obtains from a room hung with tapestries. The woodwork is in gold, softened into relationship with the subtle color schemes around it.

Mr. Davies has very generously and courageously said that he wishes his contribution to the room to be regarded as strictly mural, and he expects other works of art eventually to be hung against it, not considering it sacrilege if portions of the work

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A recently purchased work by John Singleton Copley now on view in the room of recent accessions of the Metropolitan Museum is of Mrs. Mary Bowers, a daughter of Joseph B. Sherburne, a gentleman of importance in Boston of the date of this picture, supposedly 1765. It was taken when Mrs. Bowers was 26 years old, and she was painted in a gown of white satin with a train of purple velvet edged with gold and held a Blenheim spaniel in her lap.

The picture came to the museum from the widow of the great-great-grandson of the sitter, having never left the family. It is in remarkable condition, a tear in the canvas to the right of the forehead being the only damage it has sustained.